



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



UNHCR CENTRAL ASIA

The 2019-2021 Regional Strategy for Central Asia

July 2019


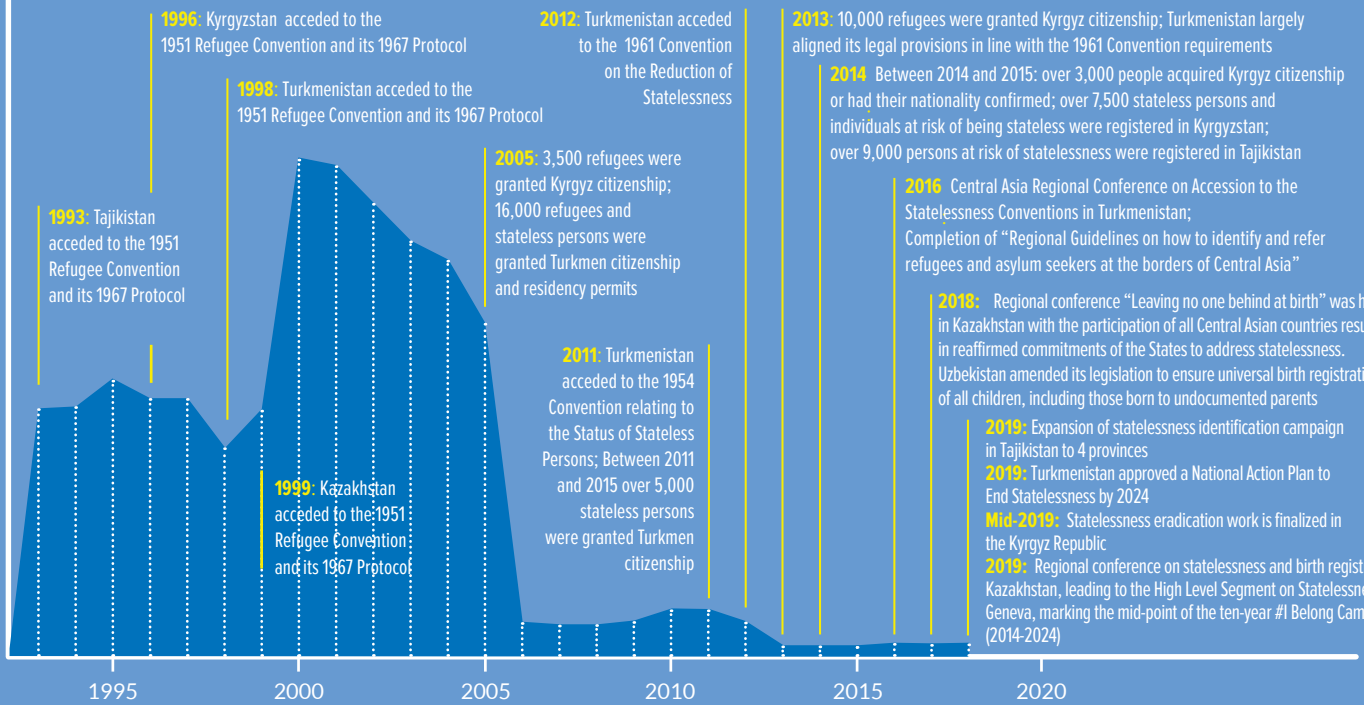
 Cover photo: Nine -year-old Fotima and Zukhro, 7-year-old Bibikhadicha, 5-year-old Beniamin, proudly show their newly-issued birth certificates. With the birth documents they can now go to school and receive medical care. Khatlon region. Tajikistan. 03 May 2018. © UNHCR/Nodira Akbaralieva.

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REFUGEES IN CENTRAL ASIA 1993-2018



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sharing a long border with Russia to the north, Afghanistan and Iran to the south, and China to the east, Central Asia is situated at the crossroads of dynamic geopolitical interests. While the five countries in the region – Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – are connected with a common history under the Soviet era, the individual countries have charted distinct post-independence trajectories that have shaped divergent national realities. With these differences in mind, UNHCR has carefully sought a regional approach and greater harmonization to tackle prevailing humanitarian challenges in the region, such as addressing statelessness, building robust systems for refugee protection, and maintaining adequate level of preparedness for humanitarian emergencies.

In recent years, Central Asia has made significant progress in reducing statelessness and establishing a legal framework governing refugees and asylum-seekers at the national level. In order to provide effective access to asylum, find solutions for refugees in protracted displacement and prevent statelessness

(including achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 16.9, by 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration) follow-up actions are essential in order to fill legislative gaps, ensure adequate resource allocation, and increase awareness and knowledge on the subject matters based on human rights principles. Opportunities, such as historic change of power in some of the Central Asian countries, their internationally-oriented strategies, and emerging signs of regional integration shall be fully taken advantage of for the coming years in the overall framework of Global Compact on Refugees.

This regional strategy outlines implementation of UNHCR’s strategic priorities while enhancing capacity strengthening activities with a view to increasing government ownership of statelessness and asylum issues by 2021. As further progress will be made particularly in the area of statelessness in the next few years, a handover of UNHCR work to the governments and development-oriented agencies in Central Asia is envisaged by the end of this three year strategy, which will coincide with the marking of the thirtieth (30th) anniversary of independence of Central Asian countries.



UNHCR’s support for the governments will be based on three strategic goals:

- ➔ **STRATEGIC GOAL 1:** Stateless people and those who are at risk of statelessness obtain an identity document and citizenship in a timely manner, and that adequate legal, policy and administrative safeguards are in place in each country to prevent future statelessness.
- ➔ **STRATEGIC GOAL 2:** Refugees have access to non-discriminatory and quality asylum procedures, and find durable solutions which are supported by enhanced partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.
- ➔ **STRATEGIC GOAL 3:** National emergency preparedness and response capacity are strengthened for responding to international and internal forced displacements.

regional strategy and is informed by government policies and plans. UNHCR will leverage coordination mechanisms put in place in each country where possible. Every effort will be made to enhance partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including the UN, international organizations, civil society, judiciary, private sector and academic institutions to achieve the strategic goals, applying the whole-of-society approach.

The regional strategy was developed in regular consultation with government ministries and other partners. It is built on a review of the 2016-2018

1.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

1.1 Regional Context

Straddling from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east and from Afghanistan in the south to Russia in the north, Central Asia consists of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. All countries were part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and gained independence in 1991. It is a region characterized by a history of people on the move, with rich and diverse culture. Home to hundreds of ethnic groups including those who led a traditional nomadic lifestyle, the region has a long tradition of different ethnicities living alongside one another.

The population movements have not always been peaceful, however. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, the region witnessed large-scale relocation of people from other parts of the USSR, many of whom returned to their ancestral lands after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The region has since experienced a period of economic hardships and political turmoil most notably the civil war in Tajikistan throughout the 1990s as well as civil strife and ethnic clashes in the Kyrgyz Republic in the 2000s which forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Several million people suddenly found themselves outside of their country of ethnic origin upon the disintegration of the USSR into fifteen separate states, leaving a significant number of individuals without nationality which has accelerated internal and external migration.

In recent years, signs for greater cooperation in the region have emerged. On-going social and economic reforms in Uzbekistan since 2016, the peaceful transition of power in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2017, and the first summit of Central Asian leaders that took place in March 2018 in nearly a decade, all point to greater integration among Central Asian countries in a range of areas from trade to resource management to free movement of people. The countries in Central

Asia have assumed a more active and prominent role in the regional diplomacy with their common neighbour, Afghanistan, to facilitate peace talks and developmental processes.

With the gradual economic, social and political achievements in mind, the alignment of some of the national laws with the international instruments relevant to UNHCR's persons of concern requires closer attention. Additionally, ongoing instability in the neighbouring countries in addition to seasonal floods, landslides and seismic activities in Central Asia warrant preparedness for internal and external forced displacement.

1.2 UNHCR's Achievements in Central Asia

UNHCR established its offices in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 1993, and later in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan in 1995 in response to the 1992-93 civil war in Tajikistan and war in northern Afghanistan that displaced thousands of people. Since their independence in 1991, Central Asian countries have been a home to nearly 100,000 refugees and persons in refugee-like situation.

In 1996, amidst growing concern about the potential of exacerbated population movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), UNHCR convened the CIS Conference at the request of the UN General Assembly¹ and established a framework to address the problems of refugees, displacement and returnees which had a wide participation not only from CIS countries but also other countries as well as inter-governmental agencies such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As these displacement situations have gradually subsided and the refugee and internally displaced

¹ A/RES/50/151, 1995

Босқындары қорғау және халықаралық көші-көн жөніндегі

2-ші министрлік конференциясы: Алматы үдерісі

2013ж. 5 маусым, Алматы қаласы, Қазақстан

II Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection
and International Migration: The Almaty Process

June 5, 2013 Almaty, Kazakhstan

II-ая Министерская Конференция по вопросам защиты беженцев
и международной миграции: Алматинский Процесс

5 июня 2013, г. Алматы, Казахстан



📷 The Ministerial conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration formally launched the Almaty Process in the auspice of Kazakhstan with the support of IOM and UNHCR. Almaty, Kazakhstan. 2013 ©UNHCR Kazakhstan

populations have reduced, the focus of UNHCR operation gradually shifted from emergency response to the one characterized by advocacy and capacity building to assist the governments to establish an effective asylum system. To this end, UNHCR assisted the governments in drafting refugee law, conducted relevant training events for authorities, produced a training manual for border officials², established regional guidelines on referral of asylum-seekers at the borders of Central Asia in collaboration with government experts³, and handed over the responsibility of refugee status determination to the

States in an incremental manner in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan by May 2017. As of 1 January 2019, there were 3,600 refugees in total in Central Asia⁴.

Central Asia is also home to a considerable stateless population. Statelessness in Central Asia is largely a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. While many were able to confirm or acquire the nationality of the successor states, some others have been unable to do so despite having had a link to a newly independent state partly due to gaps in the

² Protection Training Manual for Central Asian Border and Entry Officials, published in 2016, available in Russian at <https://unhcr.kz/eng/resources/publicationsandreports/2509/>

³ Regional Guidelines on How to Identify and Refer Refugees and Asylum Seekers at the Borders of Central Asia, available in English and Russian at <https://unhcr.kz/eng/almatyprocess/Conferences/>

⁴ Statistics relevant to refugees and stateless people cited in this documents are as of 1 January 2019 unless otherwise indicated.



📷 Rights and Prosperity, UNHCR's NGO partner, helps stateless people prepare documents for their citizenship and birth registration applications during outreach activities in Tursunzade region, Tajikistan. June 2016. ©Dilorom Kadyrova

nationality laws⁵. Subsequently, although significant progress has been made since independence, statelessness continues to affect the lives of many people, compounded by migratory movements, the lack of adequate safeguards in citizenship laws, and gaps in birth registration procedures. UNHCR has supported the efforts of the governments to address statelessness through raising awareness and analyzing the laws governing citizenship issues for policy advocacy since the 1990s⁶. In 2007 and 2009, UNHCR organized a Regional Conference on Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness and

the Protection of Stateless Persons in Tajikistan and in Turkmenistan (the latter co-organized by OSCE), respectively, with the participation of the governments and civil society from Central Asian countries. In 2011, UNHCR commissioned a research paper that comprehensively mapped out the rights situations of the stateless population in the region⁷. In the 2010s, UNHCR started to take an operational role to address statelessness by identifying and registering stateless people in partnership with NGOs while continuing advocacy for accession to the two Statelessness Conventions⁸.

⁵ There are four categories of stateless persons in Central Asia: 1) Stateless persons formally recognized as such by the State; 2) Persons with undetermined nationality, who constitute the largest group under UNHCR's stateless mandate in Central Asia, i.e. holders of USSR passports (or who lost these passports) who never obtained proof of nationality of any State; 3) De facto stateless persons, who as a result of legal provisions which cause automatic loss of citizenship if a citizen resides abroad for several years without registering at a consulate, are unable to renew their identity documentation; and 4) Persons at risk of statelessness, including children of undocumented parent(s) in one of the above categories, whose birth is not registered. Children born at home are also among the "at-risk" stateless group, since it is nearly impossible to have their birth registered due to documentation requirements by law.

⁶ Central Asian countries reaffirmed their commitments to the right to nationality and to adoption of measures to prevent and to reduce statelessness at the 1996 CIS Conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

⁷ Stateless in Central Asia, Marjorie Farquharson, May 2011. Available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ed32c9a2.html>

⁸ In 2016, UNHCR organized a regional conference in Turkmenistan to focus on the significance of the two Stateless Conventions for the efforts to end statelessness in the region. <https://unhcr.kz/eng/news-of-the-region/news/2616/>

During 2014-2018, 163,646⁹ stateless persons were identified in the region and 63,130 of them had their situation resolved with the assistance of UNHCR, NGOs and the government counterparts. As of 1 January 2019, the region hosts at least 97,510 stateless people. The real extent of statelessness in Central Asia is believed to be much greater.

1.3 The Working Environment for UNHCR

Four Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are signatories to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and have established national asylum laws. Turkmenistan is the only state in the region party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. All of the five Central Asian states have also ratified other key international human rights instruments¹⁰. UNHCR welcomes Uzbekistan's acceptance of the recommendations to accede to the four Conventions on refugees and statelessness at the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in 2018.

Statelessness issues, particularly childhood statelessness, enjoy broad commitment of the governments to improving birth registration policies and practices. The #IBelong campaign¹¹, UNHCR's ten-year campaign (2014-2024) to end statelessness in the world, will continue to be a powerful platform to advance the efforts to address statelessness in Central Asia. The High-Level Event on Statelessness, scheduled for October 2019 in Geneva at the mid-point of the campaign, will provide the countries in the region with an opportunity to showcase their accomplishment made during the first five years and to formulate

renewed pledges to reach the ultimate goal of ending statelessness by 2024.

Commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹² by the Central Asian countries provides an excellent opportunity to advance UNHCR's cause as well. In particular, Target 16.9 ("By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration") directly pertains to universal birth registration, a key component to prevent childhood statelessness, while Goal 17¹³ is instrumental for mainstreaming refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people into various state services and national development programmes in the spirit of "leaving no one behind".

The Almaty Process, an inter-governmental consultative process in Central Asia and beyond, serves as a regional platform to discuss mixed migration and refugee protection¹⁴. Through this process, in 2016, government experts from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan gathered and produced the Regional Guidelines on How to Identify and Refer Refugees and Asylum-seekers at the Borders, which continues to serve as a key vehicle to promote refugee protection and regional harmonization under the Chairmanship of Tajikistan (2019/2020).

The Global Compact on Refugees¹⁵, which was endorsed by the international community in December 2018 after extensive consultations with governments and civil society, shall be tapped into for creating a renewed momentum to resolve protracted refugee situations in Central Asia.

UNHCR supports access to territory and asylum procedures in Central Asia through the state authorities. Monitoring of border entry points and verifying the actual practices of the referral mechanism of asylum cases depend on the competent authorities.

⁹ The total number includes 86,703 stateless persons with permanent residence permits reported by the Government of Uzbekistan in 2010.

¹⁰ These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention Against Torture. In addition, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic are States parties to the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women.

¹¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>

¹² Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015.

¹³ SDG Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

¹⁴ The member states of Almaty Process are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan. Iran and Pakistan participate as observers. For further background of the Almaty Process, see The Almaty Process: Improving Compliance with International Refugee Law in Central Asia, Cynthia Orchard, International Journal of Refugee Law, 2016, Vol. 28, No. 1, 54-84.

¹⁵ A/73/12 (Part II), 13 September 2018.



📷 An Afghan girl is enjoying World Refugee Day event in Vahdat city park on 15 June 2015. Vahdat, Tajikistan.
© Ingrida Durbeiko

Establishing a formal role of UNHCR in the state asylum system would be critical for assessing the situation of people of concern to the Office. So far, UNHCR has an observer status of the national asylum system in Kazakhstan.

Mapping the stateless population is the first step of reduction. So far, the Kyrgyz Republic conducted a nation-wide identification campaign of stateless people to grasp the scale of the problem. In Tajikistan, identification campaign took place in pilot geographical areas. Major constraints were inadequate quality of infrastructure (e.g. all-weather roads, outdated civil registry system), difficult or vast terrain to cover, and poor basic service delivery particularly in remote border areas where the stateless population is concentrated. Additional challenges faced included raising awareness and overcoming the reluctance of the people in rural areas to come forward for registration.

While much achievement was made in reducing statelessness, further progress on preventing statelessness hinges on the political will to prevent statelessness through legislative amendments.

Reliable data on both the asylum applications and statelessness would enable analysis regarding refugee profiles and asylum trends which could contribute to the identification of appropriate durable solutions and planning from an early stage. Reliable data would also simplify measuring the progress made in addressing statelessness.

2.

ACHIEVEMENTS MADE BETWEEN 2016-2018

The 2019-2021 Regional Strategy builds on the outcome of the previous three-year strategy covering 2016-2018 for Central Asia which set overarching objectives of 1) enhancing state asylum system, 2) finding solutions for refugees, and 3) reducing and preventing statelessness.

2.1 Enhancing State Asylum System

- A total of 1,989 asylum applications were submitted, and 827 individuals were newly recognized as refugees benefitting protection in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.
- The Regional Guidelines on how to identify and refer refugees and asylum seekers at the borders of Central Asia were established in 2016 by the government experts from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
- The legal framework governing refugees and asylum was further strengthened. For example, the Law on Refugees of Turkmenistan was amended in 2017, introducing progressive provisions such as enhanced protection for unaccompanied children seeking asylum, and temporary and complementary

protection. In January 2017 the new criminal code of the Kyrgyz Republic came into force, introducing non-penalization for illegal border crossing of persons who entered the Kyrgyz Republic illegally with intention to seek asylum.

- Responsibility of refugee status determination was gradually handed over to the government from UNHCR in a responsible manner subsequent to several years of capacity enhancement and transfer of technical knowledge. In Uzbekistan, relevant legal framework governing refugee issues is planned to be developed in the coming years.

As an integral part of enhancing national asylum system, UNHCR supported emergency preparedness.

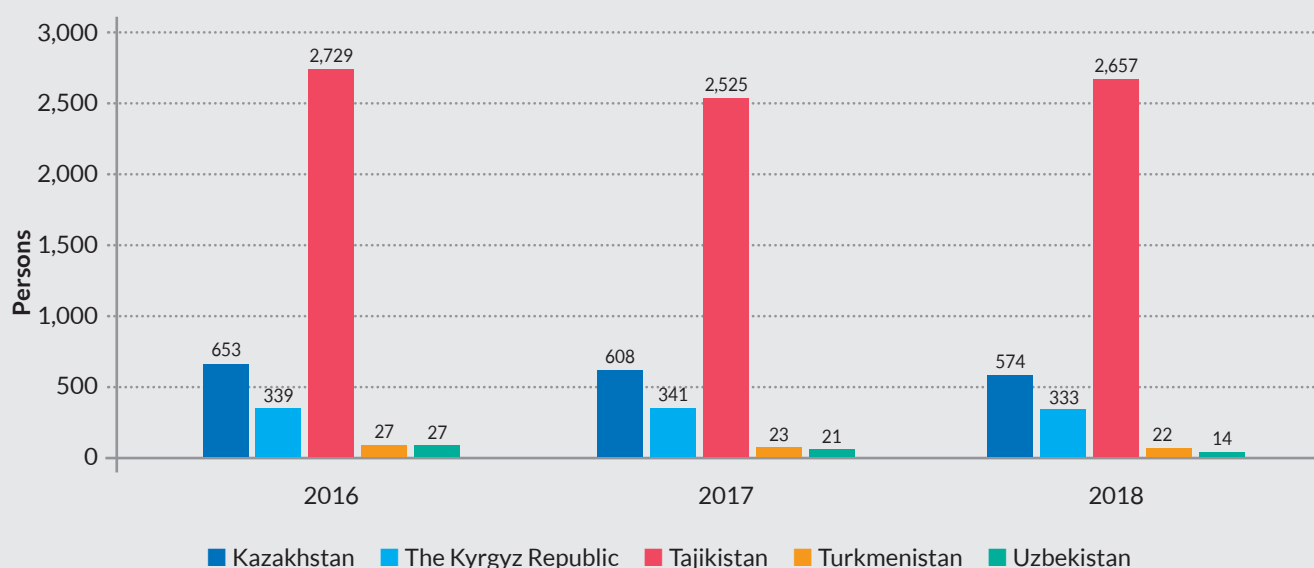
- Emergency preparedness workshops were organized to raise awareness on protection sensitive aspects of humanitarian emergency response in several countries. For example, in Tajikistan, a table-top simulation exercise training for the government and partners was organized in 2017 with a subsequent field simulation exercise in 2018 to increase preparedness and enhance the ability of the humanitarian community to support the government in refugee emergency response.

Asylum applications lodged in Central Asia (2016-2018)

	2016	2017	2018	Total (persons)
Kazakhstan	242	259	138	639
The Kyrgyz Republic	193	128	100	421
Tajikistan	273	135	521	929
Turkmenistan	0	0	0	0
Uzbekistan	0	0	0	0
Total	708	522	759	1,989

(1st instance applications lodged to the governments and UNHCR (Tajikistan includes first & appeal instances)
Source: UNHCR Annual Statistical Reports (unhcr.popdata.org)

Refugee Population in Central Asia, 2016-2018



Source: UNHCR Annual Statistical Reports

Inter-agency contingency planning is revised to incorporate lessons-learned identified during the exercise.

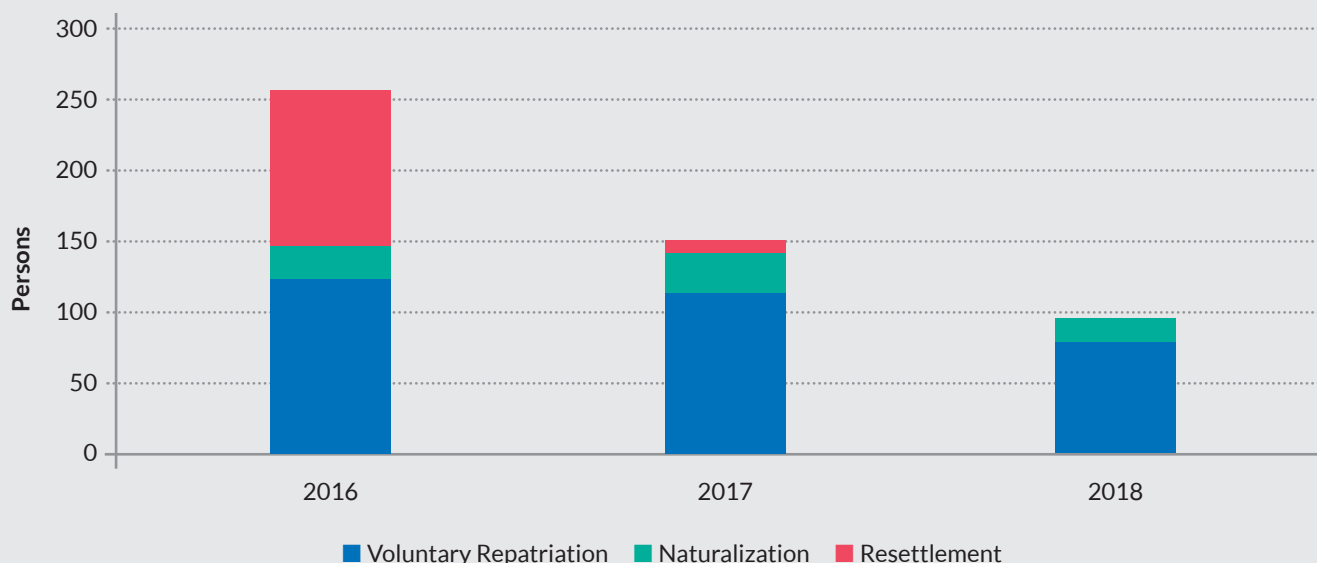
- A contingency plan for refugee influx was developed in the Kyrgyz Republic in collaboration with the inter-ministerial and inter-agency working group co-chaired by the Ministry of Emergency Situations and UNHCR.
- Knowledge was imparted among government officials and NGO partners through supporting their participation in specific training on humanitarian emergency response organized by UNHCR Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness (eCenter) based in Bangkok, Thailand.

2.2 Finding Solutions for Refugees

Refugees

- A total of 501 refugees found durable solutions through naturalization (68), voluntary repatriation (314) and third-country resettlement departures (119) in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Since around 2016, no new resettlement cases were feasible due to high demands in other parts of the world.
- Close to 900 refugees (804 from Tajikistan alone, mostly to Canada) found a new home in third countries at their own initiative through privately-sponsored programmes.
- National legislation was amended to facilitate fast-track naturalization of refugees. Kazakhstan changed the law in 2018 to simplify the procedures for refugees to acquire permanent resident status, which is a necessary step for naturalization. Between 2016 and 2018, a total of 29 refugees were granted citizenship of Kazakhstan and 105 refugees acquired a permanent resident status.
- In several countries, innovative partnerships were forged with private sectors to diversify UNHCR's livelihood interventions for refugees, such as the

Type of durable solutions found in Central Asia (2016-2018)



Source: UNHCR Annual Statistical Reports

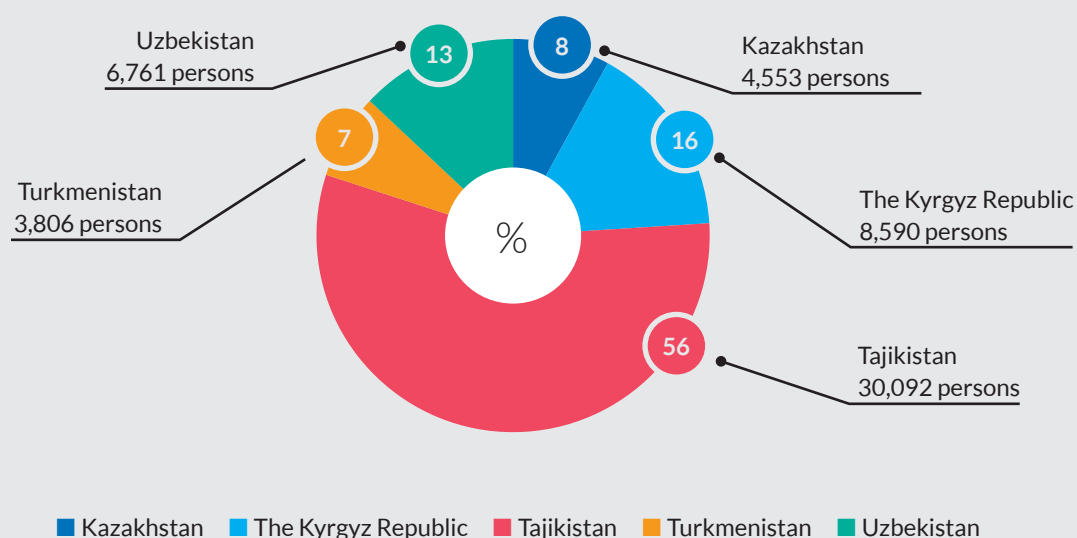
launch of the apprenticeship course at Hilton Hotel in Tajikistan in 2017 and the internship and employment opportunities at Negal in Kazakhstan in 2018. Six out of 14 refugees who completed the Hilton Hotel initiative have been employed by hotels upon the completion of the course, which is supported by the Ministry of Labour and Migration of Tajikistan that provides a state-recognized certificate.

2.3 Reducing and Preventing Statelessness

Statelessness

- In coordinated efforts with the respective government and NGO partners, 163,646 stateless people (including those with undetermined nationality and those who are at risk of statelessness) were identified in the five countries in Central Asia between 2014 and 2018.
- Among those who were identified, 63,130 people had their stateless situations resolved through confirmation or acquisition of their citizenship in the same four-year period.
- In some countries, citizenship laws and other relevant regulations were reformed, bringing them closer to international standards (e.g. the definition of a stateless person included in Tajikistan, safeguards put in place for avoiding statelessness in Uzbekistan).

Stateless people who found a solution in Central Asia (2016-2018)



Source: UNHCR Annual Statistical Reports

2.4 Key Lessons Learned from the 2016-2018 Regional Strategy

Protection advocacy is the key to achieving strategic objectives, in particular through partnership with UN Country Team in the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), Partnership Framework for Development (PDF) and SDGs, governments, international organizations, and the Offices of Human Rights Ombudspersons.

Enhancing State Asylum System

- As per the 1951 Convention, it is important to ensure that the asylum policies are implemented in the spirit of its overriding humanitarian principles.
- As the Tajikistan example demonstrated, UNHCR can bring an added-value and play a catalytic role for the efforts to build emergency preparedness in collaboration with a range of stakeholders of state asylum system.

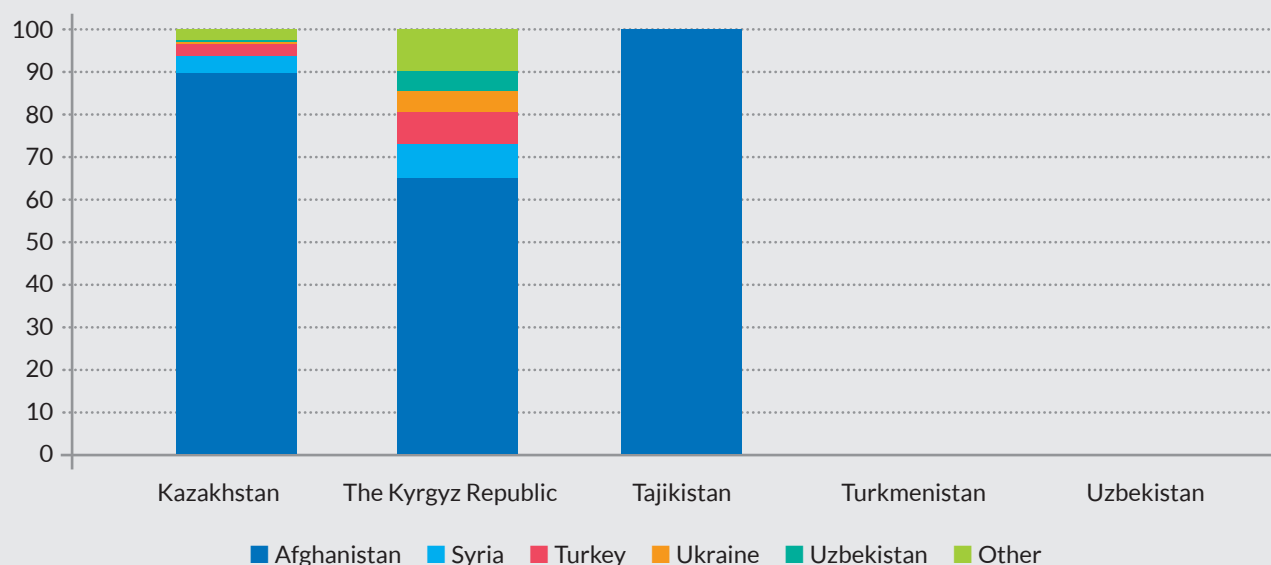
The Almaty Process continues to provide the governments in Central Asia with an important platform to promote regional harmonization of asylum practices that would facilitate consistent application of

the 1951 Refugee Convention in a manner upholding international standards while national security concerns are taken into account.

Finding Solutions for Refugees

- The number of refugees voluntarily returned to their country of origin has been in decline (123 refugees in 2016, 113 in 2017, 78 in 2018). Considering that over 90% of the refugee population in Central Asia come from Afghanistan, conflicts continue making safe return home for the refugees unviable. Similarly, resettlement departures have significantly decreased due to a sharp rise in global resettlement needs (110 refugees in 2016, 9 in 2017, zero in 2018). Privately-sponsored admission programmes remain available, most notably to Canada which accepted 765 refugees from Tajikistan between 2016 and 2018, though access to third country solutions is generally limited. This leaves naturalization, permanent or longer term residence or other alternative legal status the only remaining options for the vast majority of refugees in Central Asia.

Countries of Origin of Asylum-Seekers in Central Asia, 2016-2018



Source: UNHCR Annual Statistical Reports

- Government engagement is the key to inducing positive change, in particular to identify a sustainable solution for the remaining 380 mandate refugees¹⁶ whose lives have been put on hold for more than a decade.

Reducing and Preventing Statelessness

- Significant progress has been made in identifying and reducing known statelessness cases in all the five countries. However, country-wide mapping of stateless populations will be critical in the coming years.
- Preventing statelessness, particularly through ensuring universal birth registration is considered achievable in the coming years.

¹⁶ Mandate refugees refer to those who are recognized by UNHCR pursuant to its mandate set forth in UNHCR Statute. Convention refugees are refugees recognized by the governments as per their national asylum law. In Central Asia, UNHCR no longer conducts refugee status determination.

3.

UNHCR'S STRATEGIC ORIENTATION 2019-2021

3.1 Direction and Focus

The 2019-2021 Regional Strategy for Central Asia is informed by the global UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021¹⁷, the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness (2014-2024)¹⁸, the outcome of the 2016-2018 Regional Strategy for Central Asia, and consultations with the governments, NGO partners and UNHCR's persons of concern. The Global Compact on Refugees will provide an overall guidance.

Based on the lessons learnt from the previous 3 year strategy, the 2019-2021 Regional Strategy will be aided by the Communication Strategy for UNHCR Central Asia that closely examines diverse communication channels and tools for sharpening messaging with adequate visibility to reach out to the right audience in accordance with country-specific media and political landscapes. Communicating with Communities is a pivotal component of the communication strategy.

Aligned with the corporate guidelines and policies, UNHCR – for its small-scale direct assistance projects – will make a further shift to cash-based intervention (CBI) while redoubling its effort to enhance resilience and self-reliance of the refugees from the outset in order to decrease their dependency on external support. Expansion of livelihoods opportunities will be a priority, which will be adjusted by the new livelihood policy, due in 2019.

Emergency preparedness is a UNHCR's corporate priority that requires regular updates. Every country is required to establish a minimum level of preparedness for potential refugee emergencies.

To ensure that refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people are at the centre of all UNHCR's activities, it is imperative to engage them through participatory assessments on a regular basis. UNHCR strives to ensure their meaningful participation in designing an effective response and rights-based approach.

Cross-cutting issues such as prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), age, gender and diversity equality¹⁹ will be integral part to the development and implementation of the 2019-2021 Regional Strategy in Central Asia. It will not only adhere to UNHCR's zero tolerance policy against SEA but also contribute to the broader UN's concerted efforts to address SEA.

¹⁷ <http://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.unhcr.org/statelessnesscampaign2014/Global-Action-Plan-eng.pdf>

¹⁹ For example, see UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, March 2018 (UNHCR/HCP/2018/1). Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-gender-diversity-accountability-2018.html>

3.2 Strategic Goals, Expected Output and Key Activities

3.2.1. Strategic Goal 1

Stateless people and those who are at risk of becoming stateless obtain an identity document and citizenship in a timely manner, and that adequate legal, policy and administrative safeguards are in place in each country to prevent future statelessness.

Expected outputs

- Children without birth registration will be identified and registered in a timely manner.
- All children will receive birth certificate immediately after birth irrespective of the legal or documentation status of their parents.
- National legislation on birth registration and citizenship will be amended to safeguard prevention of statelessness.
- Currently known stateless cases in Central Asia (97,510 individuals in total) will find a solution through confirmation or acquisition of nationality.
- The procedures to determine statelessness status will be formally adopted in all Central Asian countries.
- The two Statelessness Conventions (the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness) will be acceded by Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Key activities

1. With its government counterparts and relevant UN partners, UNHCR will organize a round of national consultations to assist the governments in improving birth registration and civil registry legislative frameworks (five Central Asian countries).
2. Building on achievements that have been made to reduce statelessness, support government partners in Tajikistan to expand the registration campaign of stateless people to statewide, targeting approximately 50,000 stateless persons to find solutions by 2021 (Tajikistan).
3. Reinforce advocacy with the governments in collaboration with other stakeholders for legislative and policy reform to bring the relevant national legislation in line with the international standards (five Central Asian countries).
4. Promote accession to the two Statelessness Conventions (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).
5. Support the government working groups or national action plans to establish the status determination procedures of stateless persons (five Central Asian countries).
6. Encourage the national statistics committee and others to include questions related to statelessness in the upcoming national censuses to better collect data (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan in 2020; Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 2022).

3.2.2. Strategic Goal 2

Refugees have access to non-discriminatory and quality asylum procedures, and find durable solutions which are supported by enhanced partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.

Expected outputs

- The respective governments in Central Asia take full ownership of the management of the refugee status determination system whose quality is in conformity with the international standards.
- Most of the long-staying refugees find a sustainable solution through complementary pathways to third-country admission (including private-sponsored programmes), voluntary repatriation, or local integration including alternative stay arrangements.
- Refugees in Central Asia are accorded with a set of rights as prescribed by the 1951 Refugee Convention and other international human rights instruments.
- More refugees find enhanced self-reliance and adequate livelihood opportunities which will also lead to increased dignity and reduce dependency on external assistance.

Key activities

1. Scale up the efforts (advocacy, capacity building and legal advice) to strengthen partnerships with relevant government actors (asylum authorities, border guards), judiciary, parliamentarians and ombudspersons with the objective to improve the quality of legislation and adjudication process.
2. Expand partnerships with the UN agencies and civil society to strengthen sustainability of social and legal assistance programmes provided for UNHCR's persons of concerns, which so far have been sustained by UNHCR, and putting refugees and asylum-seekers on par with nationals and other permanently residing foreigners in terms of enjoyment of rights.
3. Seek a wider range of stakeholders and potential allies to realize a durable solution for mandate refugees who have been in legal limbo for protracted period of time despite having achieved high degree of social integration in the host community.
4. Develop refugees' skills and potential for self-reliance through community-based approaches which will also nurture peaceful co-existence with the host community.
5. Support a selected number of deserving but vulnerable refugee youth for tertiary education through scholarship opportunities²⁰. Acquired skills will be useful for all individuals.

²⁰ In 2018, UNHCR's higher education scholarship programme, DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) funded by the German government, supported 19 young refugees (11 male and 8 female) to pursue university studies (2 in the Kyrgyz Republic, 17 in Tajikistan). Further details on DAFI are available at <https://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>



📷 A UNHCR staff member talks to the families of returnees displaced by the clashes in Osh city, in the South of Kyrgyzstan. June 2010. © UNHCR/S.Shulman

3.2.3. Strategic Goal 3

National emergency preparedness and response capacity are strengthened for responding to international and internal forced displacements.

Expected outputs

The governments, civil society and UN agencies have adequate capacity and systems in place to respond to the international and internal forced displacements.

Key activities

1. Lead inter-agency trainings for UN agencies, NGOs and the government officials including implementation of the Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs).
2. Create learning opportunities and knowledge-sharing platforms on the refugee emergencies,

international protection and humanitarian response.

3. Where necessary, coordinate the development of contingency plans and implementation of the Advanced Preparedness Actions.
4. Participate in and contribute to the inter-agency disaster response platforms.

Note: Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs) are mandatory actions that enable a country operation to make itself ready to trigger advanced processes when the risk of an influx arises. MPAs are a regular part of UNHCR's work and are not risk- or scenario-specific.

4.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

4.1 Regional Overview

4.1.1 Protection Advocacy, Partnerships and Communications

Since opening its offices in Central Asian countries following their independence, in the early 1990s, UNHCR has worked closely with and supported the governments in responding to emergency humanitarian situations, and gradually in acceding to the international legal instruments, finding solutions for the people of concern to UNHCR, in building local capacity, in establishing and taking over full responsibilities of national asylum systems, and in ensuring that practical guidelines and directions are in place for the reduction and prevention of statelessness.

Over the years, strategic priorities of the operation have slowly and steadily shifted from direct delivery of assistance to capacity building, awareness-raising and advocacy. Partnerships are critical in communicating, ensuring understanding of protection advocacy. Marking the 30th anniversaries of the independence of the Central Asian countries in 2021, UNHCR plans to develop protection advocacy strategies and plans in partnership with all relevant interlocutors, taking into consideration local and regional specificities in the areas relevant to asylum and statelessness.

As of 2019, UNHCR maintains its Regional Office for Central Asia in Almaty/Kazakhstan, implements its activities through its presence in Bishkek/the Kyrgyz Republic, Dushanbe/Tajikistan and Nur-Sultan/Kazakhstan and with its UN and NGO partners in Ashgabat/Turkmenistan and Tashkent/Uzbekistan. As an integral part of the UN Country Teams in the

region, UNHCR continues to pursue most cost-efficient implementing modalities, such as the use of UN Common Premises and services, among others, together with the UN Resident Coordinator's Offices, the UN Country Team members, and with the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA).

UNHCR will

- Continue to develop relationships with the respective governments, Parliamentarians, Ombudspersons, judiciary, UN entities, NGO partners, civil society actors and donor community in support of the world without statelessness and refugees to able to find durable solutions.
- Work with the State Migration Services, the Ministries of Interior and Justice, State Registration Services, and State Border Services in Central Asian countries.
- Strengthen its partnership with UNICEF in the joint strategy to address childhood statelessness under the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality (2018-2020) in respective countries.
- Continue operational partnerships and coordination with other UN entities, including UNDP and ESCAP²¹ in the field of Civil Registry and Vital Statistics (CRVS), and IOM which provides secretariat support for the Almaty Process with UNHCR.
- Maintain its partnership with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to amplify efforts to address statelessness, and participate in OSCE simulation-based training exercise "Combating human trafficking along

²¹ UNHCR seeks synergy with ESCAP's Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade (2015-2024), proclaimed at the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific, held November 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand. All of the Central Asian countries are involved in this initiative. For further details, visit <http://getinthepicture.org/>



📷 Kojomberdi 4, lives in the Osh region of the Kyrgyz Republic with his parents. His mother Shirmakhon, born in present-day Uzbekistan in the 1970s, moved to what is now the Kyrgyz Republic as a USSR citizen in the 1990s after being married. At the time of Kojomberdi's birth, neither of his parents were formally recognized as Kyrgyz citizens. Kojomberdi obtained a birth certificate recently only after his mother succeeded in having her Kyrgyz citizenship confirmed with the assistance of UNHCR in collaboration with the NGO Fergana Valley Lawyers without Borders. Children in the Kyrgyz Republic born to parents with undetermined nationality are unable to have their birth registered, impeding their access to basic rights and services. 2018. © UNHCR

migration routes” at the capacity of resource providers to ensure refugee protection aspects in the training.

- Maintain partnership with the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) to join their capacity building activities for the border guard services.
- Collaborate with diverse partners, including NGO organizations, diplomatic community and private sectors to look for new opportunities.
- Increase engagement with academic institutions to raise awareness on UNHCR's mandate among students and future practitioners, such as its collaboration with Al Farabi State University in Kazakhstan where the refugee law has been incorporated in the curricula.

Stateless persons

- As of January 2019, the identified stateless population in Central Asia stands at 97,510 (7,690 people in Kazakhstan; 548 in the Kyrgyz Republic; 4,616 in Tajikistan; 4,714 in Turkmenistan, and 79,942 in Uzbekistan).
- UNHCR will take reduction and prevention of statelessness forward in each of the five Central Asian countries. Legal and policy reforms will be promoted to ensure prevention of statelessness in line with the targets outlined in the UNHCR Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024. In the framework of the Coalition on Every Child's Right to Nationality (2018-2020), UNHCR and UNICEF will collaborate further to address childhood statelessness in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, focusing on Action 1 (Resolve Existing Major

Situations of Statelessness)²², Action 2 (Ensure that No Child is Born Stateless), Action 7 (Ensure Birth Registration for the Prevention of Statelessness), and Action 9 (Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions) of the Global Action Plan.

UNHCR directly contributes to the governments' effort to achieve the SDGs in relation to Target 16.9²³. In collaboration with other stakeholders, UNHCR will advocate for legal and policy reforms to make sure that all children receive birth certificate immediately after their birth irrespective of their parents' legal status.

As the reduction efforts will continue to produce results, the focus will increasingly shift to prevention of statelessness which requires legislative change. By 2021, it is hoped that currently known stateless cases will be resolved and that relevant legislation will be revised to introduce robust safeguards against the loss or deprivation of nationality in all of the five countries in the region.

Refugees

The number of refugees in the region has not changed significantly for the last few years²⁴. It is projected that the overall number of new asylum applications for the next few years will remain at the current level²⁵.

As of 31 December 2018, there are 3,600 refugees in total in Central Asia (574 in Kazakhstan, 333 in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2,657 in Tajikistan; 22 in Turkmenistan and 14 in Uzbekistan), of which 380 refugees are recognized by UNHCR under its mandate. Over 95% of the total number of refugees originate from Afghanistan and 74% of them are hosted in Tajikistan. Syrians constitute the second largest refugee population. In addition, 666 asylum-seekers are in the State refugee status determination process, pending adjudication, 54% of whom are in Tajikistan. The majority of the refugees have lived in Central Asia for many years, and are well-integrated in the local society.

However, many refugees experience difficulties in accessing state services and livelihood opportunities for various reasons. The temporary nature of refugee status (often for one year only, renewable upon physical appearance) does not facilitate them to find long-term formal employment and, in some countries, access to permanent residence which is a necessary step for naturalization.

UNHCR will

- Build on past achievements of promoting refugee self-reliance with a focus on skills training, job placement and small business entrepreneurship in a community-based model thereby deescalating potential tensions with the local community.
- Use every opportunity to advocate that the authorities strengthen national refugee law and its implementation, as well as improving the rights and entitlements of refugees recognized by the governments.
- Scale up the advocacy efforts to find a durable solution for the remaining 380 mandate refugees in the region, many of whom have strong ties to the host country through family links and express their intention to stay in the host countries.
- Provide cash-based assistance to most vulnerable mandate refugees in all of the Central Asian countries in accordance with the established standard operating procedures until they find a long-term legal solution.

4.1.2 Kazakhstan

Statelessness: 7,690 people are currently known to be without nationality in Kazakhstan, of whom 7,156 stateless persons registered by the Government and 534 persons with undetermined nationality registered by UNHCR's NGO partners, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, and Sana Sezim. One of the characteristics of statelessness in Kazakhstan is a large proportion

²² Except for the Kyrgyz Republic

²³ SDG 16 Target 9: By 2030, Provide Legal Identity for All, Including Birth Registration.

²⁴ 3,775 refugees in 2016, 3,518 refugees in 2017, and 3,600 refugees in 2018.

²⁵ In 2016, a total of 708 asylum applications were lodged in Central Asia. In 2017, 522 applications, and in 2018, 759 applications. See the graph on p.15



📷 Afghan refugee women demonstrate their handicrafts at the Refugee Art Exhibition. Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. April 2017. © UNHCR

(93%) of stateless population who have been formally given stateless status by the Government. Since they are accorded with almost the same set of rights on par with nationals (except for political rights), there is little incentive for this group of people to resolve their stateless situation.

UNHCR provided technical support to the Government of Kazakhstan for their project to investigate the situation of stateless people and UNHCR's other persons of concern in the country in 2012²⁶. Since the launch of #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness in 2014, the Government of Kazakhstan conferred citizenship on 7,699 stateless people by the end of 2018. Most of the undetermined nationality in Kazakhstan are complex cases that require a lengthy process involving a third country, often another CIS country or countries, to ascertain the nationality of the individual concerned. UNHCR will continue working with the NGO partners that provide legal service to resolve statelessness situation of the identified cases.

Given this specific profile of stateless people, the prevention of statelessness is increasingly key to the future success of eliminating statelessness in Kazakhstan. UNHCR will seek to assist the Kazakh authorities in amending the national legislation to facilitate the registration of all children at birth and issue a birth certificate irrespective of their parents' legal status. Granting nationality to children born in its territory if otherwise stateless is also advocated for. Thanks to the partnership forged with UNICEF and others, the number of the identified cases may increase as more stateless people may be identified. However, it is assessed that Kazakhstan has capacity to address them by 2021/2022 subject to political will. At the same time, UNHCR will continue its dialogue with relevant authorities to collect disaggregated data and ascertain the geographical spread of those people who have been formally recognized as stateless by the Government.

UNHCR will continue to encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to accede to the two Statelessness Conventions.

²⁶ Special Report on the Situation concerning the Rights of Oralman, Stateless Persons and Refugees in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Commission on Human Rights under the Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, February 2012 (available in English and Russian), <https://unhcr.kz/eng/resources/publicationsandreports/1870/>



📷 Refugee women and girls enjoy cooking together, with the generous support of Compote that organizes culinary master classes, through which their specific issues are discussed and resilience built in a safe and informal environment, Almaty. December 2018. © UNHCR Kazakhstan

Refugees: Currently there are 574 refugees in Kazakhstan (553 recognized by the government and 21 by UNHCR under its mandate). 93% of them are from Afghanistan, most of whom have lived in Kazakhstan for more than ten years. 19% of the total number of refugees were born in Kazakhstan. The refugees mainly reside in Almaty and Shymkent in urban setting. Fluent in local languages, many are well-integrated in the local society and see their future in Kazakhstan.

It is assumed that the number of newly arriving asylum-seekers in Kazakhstan from 2019-2021 will reach approximately 150 individuals per year. The majority will continue to be from Afghanistan.

Prevention of refoulement (forcible return) through a practical mechanism for the referral of asylum-seekers from the border authorities to the competent State agency is a priority. The National Refugee Law stipulates that individuals who do not possess valid identity documents or cross the border in an irregular manner should be able to apply for asylum. In practice however asylum-seekers without valid travel documents and visas (if required) might face the risk of not being allowed entry into Kazakhstan.

The refugees recognized by the Government receive a one-year residence permit which can be annually renewed upon physical appearance. This relatively short-term status impede their access to longer-

term employment and social benefits including the national pension system. While the national legislation was amended to ease the requirements for refugees to acquire a permanent legal status, refugees are required to have a large deposit in a local bank to prove their financial capacity and to possess a valid national passport, as other categories of foreigners are. UNHCR will prioritize its advocacy with the government for inclusion of refugees in the state social services and legislative changes aiming at facilitating refugees' acquisition of permanent legal status and naturalization.

As of 2019, 21 refugees recognized under UNHCR's mandate currently have no legal documentation. They are particularly vulnerable, with no formal access to basic services or livelihood. UNHCR will continue to seek alternative, local solutions for them in collaboration with the Government of Kazakhstan. UNHCR and partners will work closely with the authorities offering pragmatic support and solutions to strengthen their capacity and promote state ownership of refugee protection.

Emergency Preparedness efforts: In Kazakhstan, UNHCR will continue to collaborate with the Department of Emergency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Red Crescent Society, the UN agencies and international organizations, such as the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), OSCE, to maintain awareness on the

international standards, protection and humanitarian principles during emergency situations. It will entail expert advice, targeted trainings on specific themes and inclusive approach with regard to the national and UN disaster management platforms.

4.1.3 The Kyrgyz Republic

Statelessness: The Kyrgyz Republic is the only country in Central Asia that has expanded an identification campaign of stateless people to countrywide. All of the 13,707 people registered so far between 2014 and June 2018 have had their stateless situations resolved in practice (as of July 2019). While new stateless or those at risk may be identified, the Kyrgyz authorities have confirmed their capacity and that mechanisms are in place to address them throughout the course of 2019.

Given the significant reduction made in the existing stateless cases, it is increasingly important to ensure that robust safeguards – prevention mechanisms – are put in place to prevent future statelessness. In this regard, UNHCR, in partnership with UNICEF and in close collaboration with civil society organizations, intends to streamline the support rendered to the authorities in improving the country's birth registration legislation and practices to ensure that every child's birth is documented in line with international standards and nationality will be granted to children who would otherwise become stateless.

The Kyrgyz Republic is currently undergoing a number of legal reforms, which may directly impact on statelessness in the country. UNHCR will advocate for and offer support to the legislative changes to ensure adequate safeguards for loss or deprivation of citizenship. It will also provide technical assistance to establish statelessness status determination (SSD) procedures in 2019.

Refugees: The most acute and long-standing issue that needs to be addressed is the solutions for 146 mandate refugees who have been in legal limbo for a number of years. Proficient in local languages, they are socially and culturally well integrated into the Kyrgyz society. The vast majority of these refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, consider Kyrgyzstan as their home. UNHCR will step up its advocacy efforts involving a wider range of stakeholders to find ways to regularize their status.

Building on on-going efforts, UNHCR will continue to address the existing gaps in the current national asylum system through advocacy, legal advice and capacity building of the state institutions. The main objective to seek legal reform is to improve refugees' access to the social and economic rights, including the rights to own a property, to register businesses and to access to the social safety nets on par with the nationals.

In its supervisory role to oversee compliance with international refugee laws UNHCR will collaborate with and support the border guard authorities and other relevant line ministries to ensure unhindered and non-discriminatory access to asylum and due procedures.

Emergency Preparedness: On the internal forced displacement situations, UNHCR will continue to play an active role in the inter-agency and inter-ministerial Disaster Response Coordination Unit (DRCU). This will include joint training and seminars on thematic issues related to best practices and benchmarks for responding to man-made and natural disasters.

On the international forced displacement situation, UNHCR will reinforce its existing bilateral cooperation with the State Migration Services and with the State Border Services to ensure that pertinent knowledge, awareness, legal and policy frameworks are in place for efficient and effective response to any large-scale international forced displacements.

4.1.4 Tajikistan

Statelessness: Of the 35,189 stateless people identified in three regions, 30,638 have been provided with solutions since 2014. With the support of the government, UNHCR will expand identification activities to eight new target districts in January 2019. So far, UNHCR and NGO partners (Rights and Prosperity and Chashma) have focused on resolving relatively straightforward cases of statelessness. However there are complex cases that may be subjected to prosecution as a result of lengthy stays in Tajikistan without legal status (mostly women from Uzbekistan married to Tajik citizens). The Amnesty Law has been drafted specifically to address these cases but the adoption of the draft law has remained

pending since 2015²⁷. Problems related to a lack of valid identity documents affect women and children in rural areas in particular since their families often pool limited resources to prioritize male family members in resolving the problem. 65% of total identified stateless population are female (women and girls). UNHCR will continue to cover administrative and transport fees for very vulnerable stateless persons who are unable to do so when resolving their legal and documentation issues.

To prevent statelessness, UNHCR in close partnership with UNDP and UNICEF will accelerate advocacy for the reform of the Civil Registration Law and Instruction to it. The current law does not allow parents with unclear legal status and/or who lack identity documents to register the birth of their child. Tajikistan's birth registration rate stands at 96%²⁸. In 2019, UNICEF and UNHCR will assist 2,500 children at risk of statelessness to obtain birth certificates under the global framework of the Coalition on Every Child's Right to Nationality (2018-2020).

UNHCR will also continue to encourage the Government of Tajikistan to accede to the two Statelessness Conventions. In 2016, Tajikistan developed a National Human Rights Action Plan, which incorporated the recommendations made at the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review including exploration of the accession to the Statelessness Conventions.

Refugees: UNHCR will focus on sustained investment in Government capacity – especially improving access to territory and asylum which is a necessary foundation for refugees to access all basic rights. This includes technical and material support to improve legal framework of border management and asylum procedures. Emphasis is placed on enhancing protection monitoring structures and information sources as well as regularizing legal status of mandate refugees. Monitoring of the Canadian private

sponsorship programme and associated dynamics will be closely followed so as to identify and respond to its impact on the Tajik asylum system.

Government regulations #325 and #327 restrict the place of residence for asylum-seekers and refugees. Based on international human rights mechanisms (such as UN Committee against Torture²⁹), UNHCR continues to seek revising these provisions in order to ensure international protection of asylum-seekers and refugees.

UNHCR will continue to seek its participation in the government Refugee Status Determination (RSD) commission as an observer. Partnerships with a wider range of the government entities, judiciary and the Ombudsman will be strengthened for legal reform aimed at improving asylum legal framework, quality of adjudication, and proper referrals of asylum-seekers at the border entry points to the competent authorities.

Tajikistan's legal framework does not foresee refugees being naturalized. UNHCR will focus on livelihoods and inclusion of refugees into state-run social protection programs through advocacy with relevant line ministries, civil society and private sector. For example, based on the Memorandum of Understanding, UNHCR and the Hilton Hotel in Dushanbe launched a joint pilot programme in 2017 offering apprenticeship opportunities to refugee and local youth in partnership with the Adult Education Center (under the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment) and NGO partner Refugees, Children and Vulnerable Citizens (RCVC). During the four-month programme which runs twice a year, a cohort of apprentices comprised of five refugees and five Tajik nationals receive professional training on the core aspects of the hospitality industry at no cost. Upon completion, apprentices are issued with accredited certificates. Some of the successful course graduates have found jobs at various hotels. Tapping into an emerging market of Tajikistan's tourism industry, UNHCR will work towards replicating this success³⁰.

²⁷ Tajikistan has been recommended to adopt the draft law by a number of international human rights mechanisms, most recently by the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in April 2019. See Paragraph 35 (b) of the concluding observation on the second periodic report of Tajikistan issued by the Committee (CMW/C/TJK/CO/2), 9 May 2019.

²⁸ Tajikistan: Demographic and Health Survey 2017 (November 2018), Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, the DHS Program, ICF.

²⁹ See for example, paragraph 30 (c) of the concluding observation on the third periodic report of Tajikistan, Committee against Torture, CAT/C/TJK/CO/3, 18 June 2018

³⁰ For further details of the innovative UNHCR and Hilton Hotel Apprenticeship Programme in Tajikistan, please see Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Global Digital Portal, <https://bit.ly/2YcbKXI>



📷 Fawad, a young refugee from Afghanistan is employed soon after graduating from an innovative traineeship programme at the Hilton Hotel Dushanbe. This initiative was jointly launched with UNHCR under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Employment of the Population of Tajikistan. May 2017. @UNHCR/Nodira Akbaralieva

Comprehensive profiling of refugee populations showed that there was an immense interest in pursuing tertiary education to increase competitiveness and expand employment opportunities in the future. UNHCR will continue to support refugee youth through the DAFI scholarship programme.

Emergency Preparedness: With ongoing instability in north-eastern Afghanistan, which borders Tajikistan to the south, UNHCR will continue to enhance its engagement with the Government, UN agencies, international organisations and NGO partners on emergency preparedness.

Disaster preparedness and response simulations and workshops, particularly those conducted in Tajikistan in 2018, highlighted the need for UNHCR to continue its capacity building in this area. This includes strengthening informed decision-making, improving inter-agency coordination and bolstering communications and information-sharing in the event of a refugee emergency. Another refugee simulation

exercise based on lessons learned from 2018 was carried out in July 2019. Based on the results of such activities, the inter-agency contingency plan will be continuously updated while agency and government coordination is strengthened throughout 2019 and beyond.

UNHCR signed a joint work plan with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence to strengthen emergency preparedness in case of a sudden population influx into the country.

4.1.5 Turkmenistan

Statelessness: Turkmenistan is the only country in Central Asia which acceded to the Stateless Conventions. In January 2019, the government adopted a National Action Plan (NAP) to End Statelessness (2019-2024) aimed at resolving existing statelessness cases and putting in place adequate safeguards for statelessness prevention, including the establishment of stateless status



📷 Former stateless persons received their first passport of Turkmenistan at a ceremony organized by the Turkmen Government in the presence of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, Natalia Gherman, and the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan, Elena Panova. 11 October 2018, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. ©UNRCCA

determination procedures. UNHCR will provide technical support for the smooth implementation of NAP and will initiate dialogue with the relevant authorities to take advantage of the 2022 national census to update the scale of statelessness in the country.

Turkmenistan has generously conferred citizenship to a sizeable number of stateless people every year (8,145 people in total between 2011 and 2017 according to the government statistics³¹). According to the UNHCR's NGO partners (Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan, Keik Okara) that undertake statelessness prevention and reduction projects, 4,714 people are currently known to be affected by statelessness. In addition, 185 persons with undetermined nationality were assisted by NGOs to confirm a third country nationality between 2014 and 2018. Turkmenistan has made steadfast stride in reducing statelessness, a positive trend expected to continue. In order to better measure the overall progress, availability of relevant data is a priority area as jointly agreed in the UN Country Team in calling for improving quality of data.

Refugees: Currently there are 22 refugees recognized by UNHCR under its mandate. No new asylum seeker has been reported. Many of them have stayed in Turkmenistan for over a decade and are

well-integrated into the local society. However they have no legal status including the right to work and access to basic services. UNHCR will continue its effort to seek a long-term solution so that they can have access to basic rights and necessary documentation.

Turkmenistan adopted the revised Law on Refugees in 2017, which incorporated progressive provisions, such as a complimentary form of protection and a temporary protection mechanism.

Emergency Preparedness: UNHCR will build on the existing practice of annual emergency preparedness and response training in Ashgabat. It will widen its dialogue with the authorities to discuss concrete scenarios and contingency planning involving other UN agencies, the national Red Crescent Society and civil society organizations.

4.1.6 Uzbekistan

Statelessness: According to the government of Uzbekistan, there were 86,703 stateless persons in 2010 and 6,761 stateless persons were conferred Uzbek citizenship to date.

UNHCR welcomes Uzbekistan's acceptance of the recommendations at the third cycle of the United

³¹ <https://en.trend.az/casia/turkmenistan/2991456.html>



📷 In 2018, UNHCR and its humanitarian partners organized a refugee influx simulation in Tajikistan, the first time that such an exercise has involved the government agencies, UN organizations, and NGOs at capital and field levels in Central Asia. The three-day exercise is part of continuing efforts to enhance community – region – and country-level emergency response in preparation for the possible arrival of a large number of refugees fleeing conflict in a neighbouring country. April 2018. © UNHCR Tajikistan

Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in 2018 to accede to the two UN Conventions on Statelessness. UNHCR will continue to support the Government's effort in developing a roadmap to accession through providing legal advice on the legislation and possibly advising on country-wide identification of people who may be at risk of statelessness.

UNHCR will provide its expertise and support to the authorities in amending its nationality and citizenship laws to put adequate safeguards in place and prevent statelessness in future.

Uzbekistan's legislation and policies on birth registration ensure unconditional registration of birth of any child on the territory of Uzbekistan. UNHCR together with the Uzbek authorities plan to share Uzbekistan's positive experience, practices and mechanisms with other countries in the sub-region for the effective prevention of statelessness.

Refugees: Currently there are 14 refugees recognized by UNHCR under its mandate in Uzbekistan. Many of them have stayed in Uzbekistan for over a decade and are well-integrated into the local

society. However they have no legal status or the right to work or access public services.

UNHCR will continue to engage in dialogue with the authorities to seek a long-term solution for the mandate refugees through regularizing their legal status.

UNHCR welcomes Uzbekistan's acceptance of the recommendations at the third cycle of the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in 2018 to accede to the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. UNHCR offers its full support to the Government to work together on the ratification of the international instruments and on the development of the relevant legal framework. UNHCR will work with the Uzbek authorities to develop an effective national asylum system with due considerations in addressing national security concerns.

Emergency Preparedness: UNHCR stands ready to support the authorities in developing sustainable national preparedness and response mechanisms in case of a large scale international forced displacement. UNHCR will contribute to national and inter-agency efforts towards achieving this.

5.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

This UNHCR Central Asia strategy will be implemented through annual programmes, monitoring of which will be guided by the UNHCR’s Results-Based Management framework throughout the Operations Management Cycle. Multi-Functional Teams consisting of the UNHCR and partner personnel will regularly verify financial aspects of the projects, Performance and, importantly, Impact Indicators of the programmes.

More specifically and as also part of its Conventions’ supervisory role, UNHCR will closely observe access to asylum, the quality of refugee status determination procedures and decisions and compliance of the national legal and administrative frameworks governing asylum and statelessness matters in accordance with international standards.

Financial requirements are estimated as below. [USD]

	2019 ³²		2020 ³³	2021
	Refugee programme	Stateless programme		
KAZAKHSTAN REGIONAL OFFICE (regional activities, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)	4,328,075	1,200,774	3,171,295	2,859,492
	Total 2019: 5,528,849			
THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC	539,101	274,735	712,750	700,000
	Total 2019: 813,836			
TAJIKISTAN	1,317,877	1,015,585	2,020,000	2,020,702
	Total 2019: 2,333,462			
Grand Total:	8,676,147		5,904,045	5,580,194

³² Global Appeal, 2019 Update, UNHCR, page 103. ³³ Estimated budget requirements as of June 2019.

³³ Estimated budget requirements as of June 2019



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